

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-25 are currently pending in this application. Claims 1, 10 and 22 are independent.

Applicants respectfully submit that this Preliminary Amendment is being submitted merely to cross-reference the above-identified application.

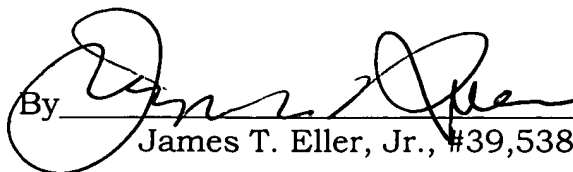
**Conclusion**

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Mr. James T. Eller (Reg. No. 39,538) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By  \_\_\_\_\_  
James T. Eller, Jr., #39,538

JTE/clb

P.O. Box 747  
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747  
(703) 205-8000